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ABSTRACT

A nationwide study was conducted to examine the trend toward or away from noncategorical teacher certification in special education, as well as patterns and limits of existing state certification systems. Responses from both State Directors of Special Education and State Certification Officers were obtained at a rate of 100% and 98% respectively. Major findings show that: (1) two distinct models of special education teacher certification (categorical and noncategorical) exist, with no regional patterns noted; (2) a slow trend toward noncategorical certification was evident; (3) 12 states offer a separate certification category for the language learning disabled; (4) 60% of states include all levels of mental retardation in a single category endorsement; (5) 20% of the states offer adapted physical education as a separate certification category; (6) 25% of the states require secondary special education teachers to have teaching certification in a specific academic/content area; (7) 30% of the states require special education teachers to have valid certification in regular elementary and/or secondary education; and (8) 50% of the states require a teacher competency examination for special education teacher certification, while 30% include an observation measurement system as part of teacher certification. The bulk of the paper presents responses to specific survey questions. A chart showing noncategorical, categorical, or both types of certification models by state is also presented. (JDD)

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A nationwide study examining the trend toward or away from non-categorical teacher certification in special education, as well as patterns and limits of existing state certification systems was conducted. Responses from both State Directors of Special Education and State Certification Officers were obtained at a rate of 100% and 98% respectively. The following is a summary of the major findings of this study:

1. As expected two distinct models of special education teacher certification, categorical and noncategorical, were found to exist throughout the United States with no regional patterns noted. As reported by State Special Education Directors, 17 states (33%) certify teachers along traditional categorical lines; 13 states (25%) utilize a noncategorical system, certifying special education teachers generically and the remaining 21 states (41%) offer both categorical and noncategorical certification options. While some inconsistencies were found, responses of State Directors of Teacher Certification were generally in accordance with those reported by State Special Education Directors. Twenty-two (43%) of these respondants report adherence to a categorical model; 11 (22%) indicate exclusive use of noncategorical systems and 17 (33%) report both categorical and noncategorical certification options. These findings in conjunction with those of Belch (1979) and Chapey, Pyszkowski and Trimarco (1985) suggest a slow trend toward noncategorical certification.

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2. As reported by State Special Education Directors, 12 states (24%) currently offer a separate certification category specifically for the Language Learning Disabled (LLD).
3. As reported by both State Special Education Directors and State Directors of Teacher Certification, approximately 60% of all states include all levels of mental retardation in a single category endorsement.
4. Approximately 20% of the states offer Adapted Physical Education as a separate certification category as reported by both State Special Education Directors and State Directors of Teacher Certification.
5. Approximately 25% of the states require secondary sepcial education teachers to have teaching certification in a specific academic/content area as reported by State Special Education Directors and State Directors of Teacher Certification.
6. As reported by State Special Education Directors and State Directors of Teacher Certification, approximately 30% of the states require special education teachers to have valid certification in regular elementary and/or secondary education.
7. Approximately 50% of the states require a teacher competency examination for special education teacher certification, while approximately 30% include an observation measurement system as part of their special education teacher certification process.

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SELECTED SPECIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION INVESTIGATIONS

Belch (1979)

11 states non-categorical

12 states categorical, but headed in direction of non-categorical

27 states strictly categorical

Chapey, Pyszkowski & Trimarco (1985)

25 states currently certifying non-categorically

26 states currently certifying categorically

35 states would prefer to certify non-categorically

Mauser & Cranston-Gingras (1987)

State Special Education Directors

- 13 states strictly non-categorical
- 17 states strictly categorical
- 21 states both categorical and non-categorical

State Directors of Teacher Certification

- 11 states strictly non-categorical
- 22 states strictly categorical
- 17 states both categorical and non-categorical

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INVESTIGATORS' PERCEPTIONS

(Mauser & Cranston-Gingras)

1. Overall lack of consensus on teacher certification in special education throughout the United States.

2. Discrepancies between responses of State Special Education Directors and State Directors of Teacher Certification.

3. Current preference for categorical certification.

4. Slow trend toward non-categorical certification options, particularly for mildly handicapped.

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INVESTIGATORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

(Mauser & Cranston-Gingras)

1. Encourage interstate collaboration on teacher competencies covering a range of handicapping conditions.

2. Utilize a needs-based perspective.

3. Match identified student needs across categories with specific teaching competencies.

4. Train prospective teachers in competencies across handicapping conditions allowing for adaptation to categorical and/or non-categorical systems.

5. Encourage flexibility in current certification practices across states to adapt to the mobility of special education teachers trained under various models.

STATE CERTIFICATION MODELS

	State Special Education Director				State Director of Teacher Certification			
	Non-Categorical	Categorical	Both	Comments	Non-Categorical	Categorical	Both	Comments
Alabama		x				x		
Alaska		x					x	
Arizona		x					x	
Arkansas			x	All new are NC				No response
California		x		NC resource specialist		x		
Colorado	x						x	
Connecticut	x				x			
Delaware			x			x		
D.C.			x	NC covers mild			x	NC covers mild
Florida			x	Varying excep. cert.			x	
Georgia		x					x	NC is RC resource
Hawaii	x						x	
Idaho	x					x		
Illinois		x		Most have 1-3		x		
Indiana		x					x	
Iowa		x		Multi. disab. offered		x		
Kansas		x				x		
Kentucky			x	All NC except TMH		x		
Louisiana			x	No new C			x	Change from C to NC
Maine			x			x		
Maryland			x		x			
Massachusetts	x			By degree of disab.	x			
Michigan		x				x		
Minnesota		x				x		
Mississippi			x			x		

C = Categorical
NC = Non-Categorical
RC = Regular Class

STATE CERTIFICATION MODELS

	State Special Education Director				State Director of Teacher Certification			
	Non-Categorical	Categorical	Both	Comments	Non-Categorical	Categorical	Both	Comments
Missouri			x			x		
Montana	x				x			
Nebraska			x	NC for UG; C for G			x	
Nevada			x	C for resource		x		
New Hampshire			x				x	
New Jersey	x				x			
New Mexico	x				x			
New York	x				x			
North Carolina		x					x	
North Dakota		x				x		
Ohio		x				x		
Oklahoma		x				x		
Oregon			x				x	
Pennsylvania	x				x			
Rhode Island			x				x	
South Carolina			x	NC for LD, EH, EMH		x		NC pending
South Dakota	x				x			
Tennessee			x		x			
Texas			x				x	
Utah			x	NC mild; C self-con.		x		
Vermont	x						x	
Virginia			x			x		
Washington	x				x			
West Virginia		x				x		
Wisconsin		x				x		
Wyoming			x				x	

C = Categorical
NC = Non-Categorical
RC = Regular Class
UG = Undergraduate
G = Graduate

3. Does your state have a separate category specifically for the Language Learning Disabled (LLD)?

State Special Education Director	12 Yes
	39 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	17 Yes
	33 No

4. For the purposes of teacher certification in your state, are all levels of mental retardation covered by a single category?

State Special Education Director	31 Yes
	20 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	32 Yes
	18 No

5. Is Adapted Physical Education a separate teacher certification category in your state?

State Special Education Director	10 Yes
	41 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	10 Yes
	40 No

6. Does your state require secondary special education teachers to have teaching certification in a specific academic/content area?

State Special Education Director	13 Yes
	38 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	11 Yes
	39 No

7. Does your state require special education teachers to have valid certification in regular elementary and/or secondary education?

State Special Education Director	15 Yes
	36 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	14 Yes
	36 No

10. Is a teacher competency examination required for special education teacher certification in your state?

State Special Education Director	29 Yes
	22 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	28 Yes
	22 No

11. Is an observation measurement system part of your special education teacher certification process?

State Special Education Director	18 Yes
	33 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	14 Yes
	36 No

12. Does your state recognize teacher training offered by agencies other than colleges or universities (i.e., school or district based inservice, state department of education) for purposes of certification or recertification?

State Special Education Director	27 Yes
	21 No
State Director of Teacher Certification	18 Yes
	32 No